GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:272
ANSWERED ON:20.11.2001
BT COTTON
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Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Department of Bio-technology favours BT cotton;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government have assessed its impact on health and environment; and

(d) if so, the details in this regard ?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT)

a), b), c) & d) : Advances in biotechnology have opened up numerous avenues for genetic modification of crops with desired traits. Accordingly, the Department of Biotechnology promotes the development and safe use of all genetically modified (GM) substances. All the scientific experiments have shown the safety of Bt. cotton, enhanced yield and reduction in the use of chemical pesticides. The GM Bt. cotton, has been evaluated for environmental and food safety and agronomic advantages.The Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation (RCGM) of the Department of Biotechnology had conducted evaluation during 1996-97 to 1998-99. In small-scale environmental trials the product was found to be safe. There was increased yield (around 40%) and reduction in chemical pesticides consumption. Based on these studies, the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) of the Ministry of Environment & Forests authorised large-scale trials, agronomic evaluation as well as generation of more information on food safety of Bt. cotton by conducting feeding trials in cattle, buffalo, birds and fish. The studies were conducted at National Diary Research Institute

(NDRI), Karnal on lactating cows; Department of Animal Nutrition, College of Veterinary Sciences, G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar on lactating buffaloes; Central Avian Research Institute (CARI), Izatnagar on poultry; and Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), Mumbai on fish. The results indicated that Bt. cotton has no harmful effect as food or feed on the target animals.

The residues of Bt. protein in soil were found to be either non-existent or were extremely low quantities and did not have any adverse effect on the microbial populations of soil samples.